ON THE EVE OF OCTOBER

BY

V. I. LENIN

MARTIN LAWRENCE, LTD.
LONDON

IN THE LITTLE LENIN LIBRARY

1. The Teachings of Karl Marx
2. The War and the Second International
3. Socialism and War
4. What Is To Be Done?
5. The Paris Commune
6. The Revolution of 1905
7. Religion
8. Letters from Afar
9. The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution
10. The April Conference
11. The Threatening Catastrophe and How To Fight It
12. Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?
13. On the Eve of October
14. State and Revolution
15. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

Reprinted from *Towards the Seizure of Power*, by V. I. Lenin

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

This book is composed and printed by union labor

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THE ever deepening crisis of power, the sharpening economic disorganisation in the country and the continuing disintegration of the petty-bourgeois parties which were losing their mass following to the Bolsheviks, led Lenin to declare at the end of September, 1917: "We have before us all the objective prerequisites for a successful uprising." From this point on he pressed with determination for the commencing of the necessary preparations for the seizure of power. At this critical period, however, he was deprived of personal participation in the work of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party where the final decisions regarding the armed uprising had to be made. Living in hiding on a strictly conspirative basis, Lenin, nevertheless, carried on an energetic correspondence with the Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd, presenting his views on every important phase of the question of the uprising.

At the beginning of the revolution Lenin had to wage a struggle against some leading Bolsheviks for a correct appraisal of the nature of the revolution and the rôle of the Bolshevik Party. (See *The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution* and *The April Conference*, Little Lenin Library, Vols. 9 and 10.) Similarly, when the revolution had reached the stage which made the realisation of the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" a certainty, Lenin again encountered an opposition which he had to overcome to save the Party from making the historical blunder of missing the propitious moment for the transfer of power to the Soviets.

In his communications to the Central Committee after the liquidation of the Kornilov revolt, Lenin insisted upon a decision in favour of the uprising, but final action was being delayed because of the division of opinion in the committee. Not until the meeting of the Central Committee on October 23, with Lenin attending, was final decision taken. Lenin reported on the timeliness of the uprising, showing that the Bolsheviks had secured the majority among the workers, that the peasants were rising throughout the land, while at the same time Kerensky was plotting to behead the revolution by turning over Petrograd to the Germans. In the resolution, which he wrote, Lenin declared that "armed uprising was inevitable and has fully matured." The resolution was adopted with Kamenev and Zinoviev voting against it, while Stalin and others energetically supported Lenin.

In his letter "Marxism and Uprising" which begins this collection, written September 26-27, Lenin answers the charge that the Bolsheviks were Blanquists, explains why the uprising during the July

days would have been premature, while the Kornilov revolt and its defeat have helped to mature the situation. He also argues for Marx's conception that "uprising is an art" and that it must be treated as such. In his other letters Lenin polemises against Kamenev and Zinoviev and their following, particularly against their policy of watchful waiting and against their conception of the rôle of the Bolshevik Party as the Left Wing in the Constituent Assembly when the latter is convened. With devastating criticism he argues against their contentions that the Bolsheviks were isolated and not strong enough alone to undertake the uprising; that the Germans were not threatening Petrograd and the bourgeoisie would not dare to sacrifice it; that it would be better to wait until the counter-revolution started and then "show them"; that the revolutionary stirrings in other warring countries were yet of small consequence and the uprising in Russia could not aid them, but on the contrary, injure them, if it were not successful; that Petrograd had provisions only for two or three days and that the insurrection would be starved out; that the soldiers might turn against the Bolsheviks if peace was not secured after the seizure of power; and, above all, that the masses were not in the mood to go into the streets to fight for power. The opposition, which still clung to their theory that the bourgeois-democratic revolution had not run its course, warned that the attempted uprising would spell disaster to the Party and arrest the progress of the revolution.

Only one week was required to completely demolish the defeatist arguments of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Lenin was at the helm and he was steering the revolution on its appointed course and the Bolshevik Party toward the fulfilment of its supreme task and duty to the Russian and international proletariat. On November 6th he wrote that "under no circumstances is power to be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co. until the 7th, by no means!—but that the matter must absolutely be decided this evening or tonight."

Having mastered the lesson that "uprising is an art," and having carried through the necessary preparations, the various Bolshevik organisations moved with military precision at the command of the helmsman, and power was transferred to the representatives of workers, soldiers and peasants, before the dawn of the 7th. The Military Revolutionary Committee which was in temporary control, turned over all state power to the 2nd Congress of Soviets, which opened that day. The Soviet Government was formed, with Lenin as head of the first Socialist Soviet State.

The Bolshevik Party, first the leader of the advanced section of the working class, became the acknowledged political leader of the Soviet Republic. Steeled in the October days, it guided the country through counter-revolution, famine, economic ruin, and sabotage, to victory over all the internal enemies of the revolution, to a firm rule of the proletarian and peasant masses—the foundation for the building of Socialism and for the establishment of a classless society.

ALEXANDER TRACHTENBERG.

ON THE EVE OF OCTOBER

MARXISM AND UPRISING

AMONG the most vicious and perhaps most widespread distortions of Marxism practiced by the prevailing "Socialist" parties, is to be found the opportunist lie which says that preparations for an uprising, and generally the treatment of an uprising as an art, is "Blanquism." *

Bernstein, the leader of opportunism, long since gained sad notoriety by accusing Marxism of Blanquism; and our present opportunists, by shouting about Blanquism, in reality do not in any way improve or "enrich" the meagre "ideas" of Bernstein.

To accuse Marxists of Blanquism for treating uprising as an art! Can there be a more flagrant distortion of the truth, when there is not a single Marxist who denies that it was Marx who expressed himself in the most definite, precise and categorical manner on this score; that it was Marx who called uprising nothing but an *art*, who said that uprising must be treated as an art, that one must *gain* the first success and then proceed from success to success without stopping the *offensive* against the enemy and making use of his confusion, etc., etc.

To be successful, the uprising must be based not on a conspiracy, not on a party, but on the advanced class. This is the first point. The uprising must be based on the revolutionary upsurge of the people. This is the second point. The uprising must be based on the *crucial point* in the history of the maturing revolution, when the activity of the vanguard of the people is at its height, when the *vacillations* in the ranks of the enemies, and *in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted, undecided friends of the revolution are at their highest point.* This is the third point. It is in pointing out these three conditions as the way of approaching the question of an uprising, that Marxism differs from Blanquism.

* The teachings of the French revolutionist, Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) favouring the overthrow of the ruling power through secret plots of a few revolutionists rather than through preparation and organisation of the masses led by a revolutionary party.—*Ed.*

But once these conditions exist, then to refuse to treat the uprising *as an art* means to betray Marxism and the revolution.

To show why this very moment must be recognised as the one when it is obligatory for the party to recognise the uprising as placed on the order of the day by the course of objective events, and to treat uprising as an art—to show this, it will perhaps be best to use the method of comparison and to draw a parallel between July 16-17 and the September days.*

On July 16-17 it was possible, without trespassing against the truth, to put the question thus: it would have been more proper to take power, since our enemies would anyway accuse us of revolt and treat us as rebels. This, however, did not warrant a decision to take power at that time, because there were still lacking the objective conditions for a victorious uprising.

1. We did not yet have behind us the class that is the vanguard of the revolution. We did not yet have a majority among the workers and soldiers of the capitals. Now we have a majority in both Soviets. It was created *only* by the history of July and August, by the experience of ruthless punishment meted out to the Bolsheviks, and by the experience of the Kornilov affair.

2. At that time there was no general revolutionary upsurge of the people. Now there is, after the Kornilov affair. This is proven by the situation in the provinces and by the seizure of power by the Soviets in many localities.

3. At that time there were no *vacillations* on a serious, general, political scale among our enemies and among the undecided petty bourgeoisie. Now the vacillations are enormous; our main enemy, the imperialism of the Allies and of the world (for the "Allies" are at the head of world imperialism), has begun to vacillate between war to a victory and a separate peace against Russia. Our petty-bourgeois democrats, having obviously lost their majority among the people, have begun to vacillate enormously, rejecting a bloc, *i.e.*, a coalition with the Cadets.

4. This is why an uprising on July 16-17 would have been an error: we would not have retained power either physically or politically. Not physically, in spite of the fact that at certain moments Petrograd was in our hands, because our workers and soldiers would not have *fought and died* at that time for the sake of holding Petro-

* The strikes and demonstrations in July and the defeat of the Kornilov revolt in September.—*Ed.*

grad; at that time people had not yet become so "brutalised"; there was not in existence such a burning hatred both towards the Kerenskys and towards the Tseretelis and Chernovs; and our own people were not yet hardened by the experience of the Bolsheviks being persecuted, while the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks took part in the persecuting.

We could not have retained power July 16-17 politically, for, *before the Kornilov affair,* the army and the provinces could and would have marched against Petrograd.

Now the picture is entirely different.

We have back of us the majority of a *class* that is the vanguard of the revolution, the vanguard of the people, and is capable of drawing the masses along.

We have back of us a *majority* of the people, for Chernov's resignation, far from being the only sign, is only the most striking, the most outstanding sign showing that the peasantry *will not receive land* from a bloc with the S.-R.'s, or from the S.-R.'s themselves. And in this lies the essence of the popular character of the revolution.

We are in the advantageous position of a party which knows its road perfectly well, while *imperialism as a whole,* as well as the entire bloc of the Mensheviks and the S.-R.'s, is vacillating in an extraordinary manner.

Victory is assured to us, for the people are now very close to desperation, and we are showing the whole people a sure way out, having demonstrated to the whole people the significance of our leadership during the "Kornilov days," and then having *offered* the bloc politicians a compromise which they *rejected* at a time when their vacillations continued uninterruptedly.

It would be a very great error to think that our compromise offer has *not yet* been rejected, that the "*Democratic Conference*" * *still* may accept it. The compromise was offered from *party* to *parties.* It could not have been offered otherwise. The *parties* have rejected it. The Democratic Conference is nothing but a *conference.* One must not forget one thing, namely, that this conference does not represent the *majority* of the revolutionary people, the poorest and most embittered peasantry. One must not forget the self-evident truth that this conference represents a *minority of the people.* It would

* Called by the Kerensky government in the attempt to secure a broader base among the petty bourgeoisie following the Kornilov revolt.—*Ed.*

be a very great error, a very great parliamentary idiocy on our part, if we were to treat the Democratic Conference as a parliament, for even *if* it were to proclaim itself a parliament, the sovereign parliament of the revolution, it would not be able to *decide* anything. The decision lies *outside* of it, in the workers' sections of Petrograd and Moscow.

We have before us all the objective prerequisites for a successful uprising. We have the advantages of a situation where *only* our victory in an uprising will put an end to the most painful thing on earth, the vacillations that have sickened the people; a situation where *only our* victory in an uprising will *put an end* to the game of a separate peace against the revolution by openly offering a more complete, more just, more immediate peace *in favour of* the revolution.

Only our party, having won a victory in an uprising, *can* save Petrograd, for if our offer of peace is rejected, and we obtain not even a truce, then *we* shall become "defensists," then we shall place ourselves *at the head of the war parties,* we shall be the most "warring" party, and we shall carry on a war in a truly revolutionary manner. We shall take away from the capitalists all the bread and all the shoes. We shall leave them crumbs. We shall dress them in bast shoes. We shall send all the bread and all the shoes to the front.

And then we shall save Petrograd.

The resources, both material and spiritual, of a truly revolutionary war are still immense in Russia; there are ninety-nine chances in a hundred that the Germans will at least grant us a truce. And to secure a truce at present means to conquer the *whole world.*

Having recognised the absolute necessity of an uprising of the workers of Petrograd and Moscow for the sake of saving the revolution and of saving Russia from being "separately" divided among the imperialists of both coalitions, we must first adapt our political tactics at the conference to the conditions of the maturing uprising; secondly, we must prove that we accept, and not only in words, the idea of Marx about the necessity of treating uprising as an art.

At the conference, we must immediately consolidate the Bolshevik fraction without worrying about numbers, without being afraid of leaving the vacillators in the camp of the vacillating: they are more

useful *there* to the cause of revolution than in the camp of the resolute and courageous fighters.

We must compose a brief declaration in the name of the Bolsheviks in which we sharply emphasise the irrelevance of long speeches, the irrelevance of "speeches" generally, the necessity of quick action to save the revolution, the absolute necessity of breaking completely with the bourgeoisie, of completely ousting the whole present government, of completely severing relations with the Anglo-French imperialists who are preparing a "separate" partition of Russia, the necessity of all power immediately passing into the hands of *revolutionary democracy headed by the revolutionary proletariat.*

Our declaration must be the briefest and sharpest formulation of this conclusion; it must connect up with the points in the programme of peace to the people, land to the peasants, confiscation of scandalous profits, and a halt to the scandalous damage to production done by the capitalists.

The briefer, the sharper the declaration, the better. Only two more important points must be clearly indicated in it, namely, that the people are tired of vacillations, that they are tortured by the lack of decisiveness on the part of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks; and that we are definitely severing relations with these *parties* because they have betrayed the revolution.

The other point. In offering an immediate peace without annexations, in breaking at once with the Allied imperialists and with all imperialists, we obtain either an immediate truce or a going over of the entire revolutionary proletariat to the side of defence, and a truly just, truly revolutionary war will then be waged by revolutionary democracy under the leadership of the proletariat.

Having made this declaration, having appealed for *decisions* and not talk; for *actions,* not writing resolutions, we must *push* our whole fraction *into the factories and barracks:* its place is there; the pulse of life is there; the source of saving the revolution is there; the moving force of the Democratic Conference is there.

In heated, impassioned speeches we must make our programme clear and we must put the question this way: either the conference accepts it *fully,* or an uprising follows. There is no middle course. Delay is impossible. The revolution is perishing.

Having put the question this way, having concentrated our entire

fraction in the factories and barracks, *we shall correctly estimate the best moment to begin the uprising.*

And in order to treat uprising in a Marxist way, *i.e.*, as an art, we must at the same time, without losing a single moment, organise the staff of the insurrectionary detachments; designate the forces; move the loyal regiments to the most important points; surround the Alexander theatre; occupy Peter and Paul Fortress; arrest the general staff and the government; move against the military cadets, the Wild Division,* etc., such detachments as will die rather than allow the enemy to move to the centre of the city; we must mobilise the armed workers, call them to a last desperate battle, occupy at once the telegraph and telephone stations, place *our* staff of the uprising at the central telephone station, connect it by wire with all the factories, the regiments, the points of armed fighting, etc.

Of course, this is all by way of an example, to *illustrate* the idea that at the present moment it is impossible to remain loyal to the revolution *without treating uprising as an art.*

N. LENIN.

Written September 26-27, 1917.
First published in 1921 in the magazine *Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya*, No. 2.

* A division of Caucasian mountaineer troops.—*Ed.*

THE CRISIS HAS MATURED

I

THERE is no doubt that the beginning of October has brought us to the greatest turning point in the history of the Russian and, according to all appearance, also of the world revolution.

The world workers' revolution started with the actions of individuals who, by their unswerving courage, represented everything honest that has survived the decay of official "Socialism," which is in reality social-chauvinism. Liebknecht in Germany, Adler in Austria, MacLean in England—these are the best known names of those individual heroes who took upon themselves the difficult role of forerunners of the world revolution.

A second stage in the historic preparation for this revolution was a broad mass ferment which assumed the form of a split in the official parties, the form of illegal publications and of street demonstrations. The protest against the war grew—and the number of victims of governmental persecutions also grew. The prisons of countries famed for their lawfulness and even for their freedom, Germany, France, Italy, England, began to be filled with scores and hundreds of internationalists, opponents of the war, advocates of a workers' revolution.

Now the third stage has come, which may be called the eve of the revolution. Mass arrests of party leaders in free Italy, and particularly the beginning of mutinies in the German army, are undoubted symptoms of the great turning point, the symptoms of *the eve of revolution* on a world scale.

There is no doubt that even before this, there were in Germany individual cases of mutiny in the army, but those cases were so small, so isolated, so weak, that it was possible to hush them up, to pass over them in silence—and this was the main thing required to check *the mass contagion* of seditious actions. Finally, such a movement in the navy matured that it became *impossible* either to hush it up or to pass over it in silence, notwithstanding the severity of

the German military prison régime, elaborated with unheard-of astuteness and followed with unbelievable pedantry.

There is no room for doubts. We are on the threshold of a world proletarian revolution. And since we, Russian Bolsheviks, alone out of all the proletarian internationalists of all countries, enjoy comparatively great freedom, since we have an open party, a score or so of papers, since we have on our side the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the capitals, since we have on our side the *majority* of the masses of the people in revolutionary times, to us may and must truly apply the famous dictum: he who has been given much shall have to account for more.

II

In Russia, the turning point in the revolution has undoubtedly come.

In a peasant country, under a revolutionary republican government enjoying the support of the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik Parties that only yesterday held sway among the petty-bourgeois democracy, *a peasant uprising* is growing.

It is incredible, but it is a fact.

We Bolsheviks are not surprised by this fact; we have always maintained that the government of the famed "coalition" with the bourgeoisie is a government of *betrayal* of democracy and revolution, a government of *imperialist* slaughter, a government *guarding* the capitalists and landowners *against* the people.

Thanks to the deceptions of the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks, there has been and still remains in Russia, under a republic and during a revolution, a government of capitalists and landowners side by side with the Soviets. Such is the bitter and formidable reality. Is there any wonder that at the time when the prolongation of the imperialist war and its consequences are causing the people unheard-of misery, a peasant uprising has begun and is developing?

Is it any wonder that the opponents of the Bolsheviks, the leaders of the official S.-R. Party, the same party that has supported the "coalition" all along, the same party that up to the last days or last weeks had the majority of the people on its side, the same party that continues to blame and to hound the "new" S.-R.'s who have realised that the coalition policy is betraying the interest of the peasants—is it any wonder that these leaders of the official S.-R.

Party, in an editorial of their official organ, the *Dyelo Naroda,* October 12, wrote as follows:

> Almost nothing has been done up to the present time to do away with the bondage relations that still prevail in the village, particularly in Central Russia. . . . The law regulating the land relations in the village, a law that has long been introduced into the Provisional Government, and has even passed the purgatory of the Judicial Conference, has been hopelessly buried in some quagmire of a bureau. . . . Are we not right in asserting that our republican government is far from having freed itself of the old habits of the Tsar's administration, that the dead grip of Stolypin is still strongly felt in the methods of the revolutionary Ministers?

This is written by the official S.-R.'s! Just think of it: the adherents of a coalition are *forced* to admit that, in a peasant country, seven months after the revolution, "almost nothing has been done to do away with the bondage relations" of the peasants, with their being enslaved by the landowners! These S.-R.'s are *forced* to call their colleague Kerensky, and all his band of Ministers, *Stolypinists.*

Can there be found more eloquent testimony coming from the camp of our opponents to corroborate not only the fact that the coalition has collapsed, not only the fact that the official S.-R.'s who tolerate Kerensky have become an *anti-national, anti-peasant, counter-revolutionary party,* but also that the whole Russian Revolution has reached a turning point?

A peasant uprising in a peasant country against the government of Kerensky, the S.-R., of Nikitin and Gvozdev, the Mensheviks, and other Ministers, representatives of capital and of the landowners' interests! A suppression of this uprising by the republican government with *military measures!*

In the face of such facts can one be a conscientious partisan of the proletariat and at the same time deny that the crisis has matured, that the revolution is going through its greatest turning point, that the victory of the government over the peasant uprising at the present time would be the death knell of the revolution, the final triumph of Kornilovism?

III

It is self-evident that if matters have reached the point of a peasant uprising in a peasant country after seven months of a democratic republic, this proves beyond dispute that the revolution is suffering a collapse on a national scale, that it is passing through

a crisis of unheard-of severity; that the counter-revolutionary forces are approaching the *last ditch.*

This is self-evident. In the face of such a fact as the peasant uprising, all the other political symptoms, even if they were to contradict this maturing of a national crisis, would have no significance whatsoever.

But all the symptoms, on the contrary, indicate just this—that the country-wide crisis has matured.

After the agrarian question, the national question is of the greatest importance in the national life of Russia, particularly for the petty-bourgeois masses of the population. And we see that at the "Democratic" Conference packed by Messrs. Tsereteli and Co. the "national" curia take the second place in radicalism, yielding only to the trade unions and *exceeding* the curia of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies by percentage of votes cast *against* the coalition (40 out of 55). The government of Kerensky, a government suppressing the peasant uprising, is withdrawing the revolutionary troops from Finland, in order to strengthen the reactionary Finnish bourgeoisie. In the Ukraine, the conflicts of the Ukrainians in general and of the Ukrainian troops in particular, with the government are becoming more frequent.

Let us further look at the army, which in war time is of exceptional importance in the whole life of the state. We have seen that the Finnish army and the Baltic fleet have entirely *split* away from the government. We hear the testimony of the officer Dubasov, not a Bolshevik, speaking in the name of the whole front, and saying in a more revolutionary manner than the Bolsheviks that the soldiers will not fight any longer. We hear governmental reports saying that the morale of the soldiers is low, that it is impossible to guarantee "order" (*i.e.*, participation of these troops in suppressing the peasant uprising). We witness finally the vote in Moscow where fourteen thousand out of seventeen thousand soldiers voted for the Bolsheviks.

This voting in the elections to the borough councils in Moscow is one of the most striking symptoms of a very deep change taking place in the general mood of the nation. It is generally known that Moscow is more petty-bourgeois than Petrograd. It is a fact, many times corroborated and undisputed, that the Moscow proletariat has a vastly greater number of connections with the village, that it harbours more sympathies and is closer to the peasant vil-

lage sentiment, than the Petrograd proletariat. And in Moscow the votes cast for the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks dropped from 70 per cent in June to 18 per cent at present. The petty bourgeoisie has turned away from the coalition; the people have turned away from it; there can be no doubt of this. The Cadets have increased their strength from 17 to 30 per cent, but they remain a minority, a hopeless minority, notwithstanding the fact that they have been obviously joined by the "Right" S.-R.'s and the "Right" Mensheviks. The *Russkiye Vyedomosti* says that the *absolute* number of votes cast for the Cadets fell from 67,000 to 62,000. But the number of votes cast for the Bolsheviks grew from 34,000 to 82,000. They received 47 per cent of the total number of votes. There can be not the shadow of a doubt that, together with the Left S.-R.'s, we have at present a majority in the Soviets, in the army, and *in the country*.

Among the symptoms that serve not only as an indication but have a significance in themselves, must be counted the fact that the armies of the railroad men and postal employees, which are of an immense general economic, political, and military importance, continue to be engaged in a sharp conflict with the government, while even the Menshevik defensists are dissatisfied with "their own" Minister Nikitin, and the official S.-R.'s call Kerensky and Co. "Stolypinists." Is it not clear that such "support" given to the government by the Mensheviks and S.-R.'s has only a negative meaning, if any?

....*

V

Yes, the leaders of the Central Executive Committee are pursuing tactics whose sole logic is the defence of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. And there is not the slightest doubt that the Bolsheviks, were they to allow themselves to be caught in the trap of constitutional illusions, of "faith" in the Congress of Soviets and in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, of "waiting" for the Congress of Soviets, etc.—that such Bolsheviks would prove *miserable traitors* to the proletarian cause.

They would be traitors to the cause, for they would have, by their

* Chapter IV of this article has thus far not been located.—*Ed.*

behaviour, betrayed the German revolutionary workers who have started a mutiny in the fleet. To "wait" for the Congress of Soviets, etc., under such conditions means *betraying internationalism*, betraying the cause of the international Socialist revolution.

For internationalism consists not in phrases, not in protestations of solidarity, not in resolutions, but in *deeds*.

The Bolsheviks would be traitors to the *peasantry*, for to tolerate the suppression of the peasant uprising by a government which *even* the *Dyelo Naroda* compares with Stolypinists means to *destroy* the whole revolution, to destroy it forever and irrevocably. They shout about anarchy and about the increasing apathy of the masses. Why shouldn't the masses be apathetic in the elections when the peasantry has been driven to an *uprising*, while the so-called "revolutionary democracy" patiently tolerates the suppression of the peasants by military force!!

The Bolsheviks would prove traitors to democracy and freedom, for to tolerate the suppression of a peasant uprising at the present moment *means* to allow the elections to the Constituent Assembly to be fixed in *just the same way*—and even worse, more crudely—as the "Democratic Conference" and the "pre-parliament" have been fixed.

The crisis has matured. The whole future of the Russian Revolution is at stake. The whole honour of the Bolshevik Party is in question. The whole future of the international workers' revolution for Socialism is at stake.

The crisis has matured. . . .

N. LENIN.

Written October 12, 1917.

[Note by Lenin.—*Ed.*]

Publish up to here; what follows is to be *distributed* among the members of the Central Committee, The Petrograd Committee, the Moscow Committee, and the *Soviets*.

VI

What, then, is to be done? We must *aussprechen, was ist*, "say what is," admit the truth, that in our Central Committee and at the top of our party there is a tendency in favour of *awaiting* the Congress of Soviets, *against* the immediate seizure of power, *against* an immediate uprising. We must *overcome* this tendency or opinion.

Otherwise the Bolsheviks would *cover themselves with shame forever;* they would be *reduced to nothing* as a party.

For to miss such a moment and to "await" the Congress of Soviets is either *absolute idiocy* or *complete betrayal.*

It is a complete betrayal of the German workers. Indeed, we must not wait for the *beginning* of their revolution!! When it begins, even the Liberdans * will be in favour of "supporting" it. But it *cannot* begin as long as Kerensky, Kishkin and Co. are in power.

It is a complete betrayal of the peasantry. To have the Soviets of *both capitals* and to allow the uprising of the peasants to be suppressed means *to lose, and justly so,* all the confidence of the peasant; it means to become in the eyes of the peasants equal to the Liberdans and other scoundrels.

To "await" the Congress of Soviets is absolute idiocy, for this means losing *weeks,* whereas weeks and even days now decide *everything.* It means timidly to *refuse* the seizure of power, for on November 14-15 it will be impossible (both politically and technically, since the Cossacks will be mobilised for the day of the foolishly "appointed" ** uprising).

To "await" the Congress of Soviets is idiocy, for the Congress *will give nothing, it can give nothing!*

The "moral" importance? Strange indeed! The "importance" of resolutions and negotiations with the Liberdans when we know that the Soviets are *in favour* of the peasants and that the peasant uprising *is being suppressed!!* Thus, we will reduce the *Soviets* to the role of miserable chatterers. First vanquish Kerensky, then call the Congress.

The victory of the uprising is now *secure* for the Bolsheviks: (1) we can *** (if we do not "await" the Soviet Congress) launch a *sudden* attack from three points, from Petrograd, from Moscow, from the Baltic fleet; (2) we have slogans whose support is guaranteed: down with the government that suppresses the uprising of the peasants against the landowners! (3) we have a majority *in the*

* A contraction of the names of leading Mensheviks, Liber and Dan.—*Ed.*

** To "call" the Congress of Soviets for November 2, in order to decide upon the seizure of power—is there any difference between this and a foolishly "appointed" uprising? Now we can seize power, whereas November 2-11 you will not be allowed to seize it.

*** What has the party done by way of *studying* the location of the troops, etc.? What has it done for the carrying out of the uprising as "an art"? Only talk in the Central Committee, etc.!!

country; (4) complete disorganisation of the Mensheviks and S.-R.'s; (5) we are technically in a position to seize power in Moscow (which might even be the one to start, so as to deal the enemy a surprise blow); (6) we have *thousands* of armed workers and soldiers in Petrograd who can seize *at once* the Winter Palace, the General Staff Building, the telephone exchange and all the largest printing establishments. They will not be able to drive us out from there, whereas there will be such propaganda *in the army* that it will be *impossible* to fight against this government of peace, of land for the peasants, etc.

If we were to attack at once, suddenly, from three points, in Petrograd, Moscow, and the Baltic fleet, there are ninety-nine out of a hundred chances that we would gain a victory with fewer victims than on July 16-18, because *the troops will not advance* against the government of peace. Even if Kerensky has *already* "loyal" cavalry, etc., in Petrograd, when we attack from two sides and when the army is in sympathy *with us,* Kerensky will be compelled to *surrender.* If, with chances like the present, we do not seize power, then all talk of Soviet rule becomes a *lie.*

To refrain from seizing power at present, to "wait," to "chatter" in the Central Committee, to confine ourselves to "fighting for the organ" (of the Soviet), to "fighting for the Congress," means to *ruin the revolution.*

Seeing that the Central Committee has left *even without an answer* my writings insisting on such a policy since the beginning of the Democratic Conference, that the Central Organ *is deleting* from my articles references to such glaring errors of the Bolsheviks as the shameful decision to participate in the pre-parliament, as giving seats to the Mensheviks in the Presidium of the Soviets, etc., etc.—seeing all that, I am compelled to recognise here a "gentle" hint as to the unwillingness of the Central Committee even to consider this question, a gentle hint at gagging me and at suggesting that I retire.

I am compelled to *tender my resignation from the Central Committee,* which I hereby do, leaving myself the freedom of propaganda *in the lower ranks* of the party and at the Party Congress.

For it is my deepest conviction that if we "await" the Congress of Soviets and let the present moment pass, we *ruin* the revolution.

N. Lenin.

Written October 12.

P.S. A whole series of facts has proven that even the Cossack troops will not move against the government of peace! And how many are they? Where are they? And will not the entire army delegate units in *our favour?*

Chapters I-III and V, published in the *Rabochy Put,* No. 30, October 20, 1917. Chapter VI published in 1925.

A LETTER TO BOLSHEVIK COMRADES PARTICIPATING IN THE REGIONAL CONGRESS OF THE SOVIETS OF THE NORTHERN REGION

COMRADES! Our revolution is passing through a highly critical time. This crisis coincides with the great crisis of a growing world-wide Socialist revolution and of a struggle against it by world imperialism. The responsible leaders of our party are confronted with a gigantic task; if they do not carry it out, it will mean a total collapse of the internationalist proletarian movement. The situation is such that delay truly means death.

Look at the international situation. The growth of an international revolution is beyond dispute. The outburst of indignation among the Czech workers has been suppressed with unbelievable brutality, which indicates that the government is extremely frightened. In Italy things have come to a mass upheaval in Turin. Most important, however, is the mutiny in the German navy. You must picture to yourselves the enormous difficulties of a revolution in a country like Germany, especially under the present circumstances. It cannot be doubted that the mutiny in the German navy is a sign of the great crisis of the rising world revolution. While our chauvinists who preach Germany's defeat demand a sudden rising of the German workers, we Russian revolutionary internationalists know from the experience of 1905-1917 that one cannot imagine a more imposing sign of a rising revolution than a mutiny among the troops.

Think of what position we now find ourselves in before the German revolutionists. They can tell us, "We have one Liebknecht who openly called for a revolution. His voice has been stifled behind iron bars. We have not a single paper openly to bring out the necessity of a revolution; we have no freedom of assembly. We have not a single Soviet of Workers' or Soldiers' Deputies. Our voice hardly reaches the real broad masses. Still, we have made an attempt at uprising, having perhaps one chance in a hundred. But you, Russian revolutionary internationalists, have behind you

half a year of free propaganda, you have a score of papers; you have a number of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies; you have gained the upper hand in the Soviets of both capitals; you have on your side the entire Baltic fleet and all the Russian troops in Finland, and still you do not respond to our call for an uprising, you do not overthrow your imperialist Kerensky when you have ninety-nine chances in a hundred of seeing your uprising victorious."

Yes, we shall be real betrayers of the International if, at such a moment, under such favourable conditions, we reply to such a call of the German revolutionists by mere resolutions.

Add to it that we all know perfectly well of the rapid growth of plotting and conspiracy of the international imperialists against the Russian Revolution. To stifle it at any price, to stifle it both by military measures and by a peace at the expense of Russia—this is what international imperialism approaches ever closer. This is what particularly sharpens the crisis of a world-wide Socialist revolution; this is what renders our hesitancy in the matter of an uprising particularly dangerous—I would almost say criminal.

Take, further, the internal situation of Russia. The bankruptcy of the petty-bourgeois conciliation parties that express the unconscious confidence of the masses in Kerensky and the imperialists in general, is an obvious fact. That bankruptcy is complete. The voting of the Soviet delegation at the Democratic Conference against a coalition, the voting of a *majority* of local Soviets of Peasant Deputies (in spite of their Central Soviet where the Avksentyevs and other friends of Kerensky's are seated) against a coalition, the elections in Moscow where the working population is closest to the peasantry and where over 49 per cent voted for the Bolsheviks (and among the soldiers fourteen out of seventeen thousand)—doesn't all this mean a total collapse of the confidence of the masses of the people in Kerensky and the conciliators headed by Kerensky and Co.? Can you imagine that the masses of the people could say still more clearly than they said to the Bolsheviks by this vote, "Lead us, we'll follow you"?

And we, having thus won the majority of the masses of the people to our side, having conquered the Soviets of both the capitals, shall we wait? What for? Wait till Kerensky and his Kornilovist generals deliver Petrograd to the Germans, thus entering, directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, into a conspiracy both with

Buchanan and Wilhelm to completely stifle the Russian Revolution?

That the people, by the Moscow vote and by the re-elections to the Soviets, have expressed confidence in us, is not the whole story. There are signs of a growing apathy and indifference. This is easily understood. It means, not an ebbing of the revolution, as the Cadets and their henchmen declare, but an ebbing of confidence in resolutions and elections. In a revolution, the masses demand of the leading parties action, not words; victories in the struggle, not talk. The moment is drawing near when the opinion may develop among the people that the Bolsheviks are no better than the others, since they do not know how to act when confidence in them is expressed. . . .

Throughout the whole country, the peasant uprising is flaring up. It is perfectly clear that the Cadets and their satellites are minimising it in every way, reducing it, as they do, to "pogroms" and "anarchy." This lie is refuted by the fact that, in the centres of the uprising, the land is given over to the peasants; never have "pogroms" and "anarchy" led to such splendid political results! The tremendous power of the peasant uprising is proven by the fact that both the conciliators and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in the *Dyelo Naroda*, and *even Breshko-Breshkovskaya* have begun to speak of giving the land to the peasants, in order to stop the movement before it has engulfed them.

Shall we wait until the Cossack units of the Kornilovist Kerensky (who just now has been exposed as a Kornilovist by the S.-R.'s themselves) have succeeded in suppressing this peasant uprising *piecemeal?*

It seems that many leaders of our party have not noticed the *specific* meaning of that slogan which we all recognised and repeated without end. This slogan is, "All Power to the Soviets." There were periods, there were moments during a half year of revolution, when this slogan did not mean uprising. Those periods and those moments seem to have blinded some of our comrades and made them forget that, at present and for us, at least beginning from the middle of September, this slogan is *tantamount to a call to uprising.*

There can be not the shadow of a doubt about this. The *Dyelo Naroda* recently explained this "in a popular way" when it said: "Kerensky will never submit!" Of course not!

The slogan, "All Power to the Soviets!" is nothing but a call to

uprising. The blame will fall fully and unconditionally, if we, who for months have called the masses to uprising, to repudiating conciliation, fail to lead those masses to an uprising on the eve of a collapse of the revolution, after the masses have expressed their confidence in us.

The Cadets and conciliators try to scare us with the example of July 16-18, with the growth of Black Hundred propaganda, etc. Still, if any mistake was made on July 16-18, it was only that we did not seize power. I think that this was not a mistake at that time, for at that time we were not yet in a majority; at present, however, this would be a fatal mistake, it would be worse than a mistake. The growth of Black Hundred propaganda is easily understood as a sharpening of the extremes in the atmosphere of a developing proletarian and peasant revolution. But to make of this an argument *against* an uprising is ridiculous, for the impotence of the Black Hundreds, bribed by the capitalists, the *impotence of the Black Hundreds in the struggle,* does not even require any proof. In a struggle, Kornilov and Kerensky can have the support only of the "Wild Division" and the Cossacks. At present, demoralisation has set in also among the Cossacks; besides, the peasants are threatening them with civil war within their Cossack territories.

I am writing these lines on Sunday, October 21. You will read them not earlier than October 23. I have heard from a passing comrade that people travelling on the Warsaw railroad say, "Kerensky is leading the Cossacks to Petrograd"! This is perfectly plausible, and it will be our direct fault if we do not verify it carefully and study the strength and the distribution of the *Kornilovist troops of the second draft.*

Kerensky has again brought the Kornilovist troops before Petrograd in order to prevent the passing of power to the Soviets, in order to prevent the immediate offer of peace by this power, to prevent giving the whole land to the peasantry immediately, in order to deliver Petrograd to the Germans while he himself runs off to Moscow! This is the slogan of the uprising which we must circulate as widely as possible and which will have tremendous success.

We must not wait for the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which the Central Executive Committee may postpone till November; we must not tarry, meanwhile allowing Kerensky to bring up still more Kornilovist troops. Finland, the fleet, and Reval are represented at the Congress of Soviets. Those, together, can bring about an im-

mediate movement towards Petrograd and against the Kornilovist regiments, a movement of the fleet, the artillery, the machine guns and two or three army corps, such as have proven in Vyborg all their hatred for the Kornilovist generals with whom Kerensky is again in collusion.

It would be the greatest error if we failed to seize the opportunity to break up at once the Kornilovist regiments of the second draft, for fear that, in leaving for Petrograd, the Baltic fleet might expose the front to the Germans. The slanderous Kornilovists will say this, as they will tell any lie at all, but it is not worthy of revolutionists to be frightened by lies and slander. Kerensky will deliver Petrograd to the Germans, this is now as clear as daylight; no assertion to the contrary can shake our full conviction that it is so, because it follows from the entire course of events and from all of Kerensky's policies.

Kerensky and the Kornilovists will deliver Petrograd to the Germans. In order to save Petrograd, Kerensky must be overthrown and power must be seized by the *Soviets of both capitals.* These Soviets will immediately offer peace to all the peoples and thereby fulfil their duty before the German revolutionists; they will thereby make a decisive step towards frustrating the criminal conspiracies against the Russian Revolution, the conspiracies of international imperialism.

Only the immediate movement of the Baltic fleet, of the Finnish troops, of Reval and Kronstadt against the Kornilovist troops near Petrograd, is capable of saving the Russian and the world revolution. Such a movement has ninety-nine chances in a hundred of bringing about within a few days the surrender of one section of the Cossack troops, the destruction of another section, and the overthrow of Kerensky, since the workers and the soldiers of both capitals will support such a movement.

Delay means death.

The slogan, "All Power to the Soviets!" is a slogan of uprising. Whoever uses this slogan without meaning uprising, without considering uprising, let him blame himself. We must be able to treat uprising as an art—on this I insisted during the Democratic Conference, on this I insist now, because *this* is what Marxism teaches us, this is what the present situation in Russia and in the whole world teaches us.

It is not a question of voting, of attracting the "Left Socialist-

Revolutionaries," of gaining additional provincial Soviets, of holding the congress. It is a question of an uprising which can and must be decided by Petrograd, Moscow, Helsingfors, Cronstadt, Vyborg and Reval. *Near Petrograd* and in Petrograd—this is where this uprising can and must be decided upon and carried out as earnestly as possible, with as much preparation as possible, as quickly as possible, as energetically as possible.

The fleet, Cronstadt, Vyborg, Reval, can and must advance on Petrograd, crush the Kornilov regiments, arouse both capitals, start a mass agitation for a power which would immediately give the land to the peasants, immediately offer peace, overthrow Kerensky's government, create such a power.

Delay means death.

N. LENIN.

Written October 21, 1917.
First published November 7, 1925, in *Pravda*, No. 255 (3186).

LETTER TO COMRADES

COMRADES, the time we are passing through is so critical, events rush with such incredible swiftness that a publicist, placed by the will of fate somewhat aside from the main stream of history, constantly risks either being late or proving uninformed, especially if his writings appear in print after a lapse of time. Though realising this fully, I am still forced to address this letter to the Bolsheviks, even under the risk that it may not be published at all, for the vacillations against which I deem it my duty to warn in the most decisive manner are of an unprecedented nature and are capable of exercising a ravaging effect on the party, the movement of the international proletariat, and the revolution. As for the danger of being too late, I will prevent it by indicating what information and of what date I possess.

It was only on Monday morning, October 29, that I saw a comrade who had on the previous day participated in a very important Bolshevik gathering in Petrograd, and who informed me in detail about the discussion. The subject of discussion was the same question of the uprising, which is also discussed by the Sunday papers of all political trends. At the gathering there was represented all that is most influential in all branches of Bolshevik work in the capital. Only a most insignificant minority of the gathering, namely, all in all two comrades, had taken a negative stand. The arguments which those comrades advanced are so weak, these arguments are the manifestation of such an astounding confusion, timidity, and collapse of all the fundamental ideas of Bolshevism and revolutionary-proletarian internationalism that it is not easy to discover an explanation for such shameful vacillations. The fact nevertheless is there, and since the revolutionary party has no right to tolerate vacillations in such an earnest question, as this little pair of comrades, who have scattered their principles to the winds, might cause a certain confusion of mind, it is necessary to analyse their arguments, to expose their vacillations, to show how shameful they are. The following lines will be an attempt at carrying out this task.

We have no majority among the people, and without this condition the uprising is hopeless. . . .

Men capable of saying this are either distorters of the truth or pedants who at all events, without taking the least account of the real circumstances of the revolution, wish to secure an advance guarantee that the Bolshevik Party has received throughout the whole country no more nor less than one-half of the votes plus one. Such a guarantee history has never proffered, and is absolutely in no position to proffer in any revolution. To advance such a demand means to mock one's audience, and is nothing but a cover to hide one's own *flight* from reality.

For reality shows us palpably that it was after the July days that the majority of the people began quickly to go over to the side of the Bolsheviks. This was demonstrated first by the September 2 elections in Petrograd, even before the Kornilov affair, when the Bolshevik vote rose from 20 to 33 per cent in the city not including the suburbs, and also by the elections to the borough councils in Moscow in September, when the Bolshevik vote rose from 11 to 49⅓ per cent (one Moscow comrade, whom I saw recently, told me that the correct figure is 51 per cent). This was proven by the new elections to the Soviets. It was proven by the fact that a majority of the peasant Soviets, the "Avksentyev" central Soviet notwithstanding, has expressed itself *against* the coalition. To be against the coalition means *in practice* to follow the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, reports from the front prove more and more often and definitely that the soldiers are passing *en masse* over to the side of the Bolsheviks more and more decisively, in spite of the malicious slanders and attacks by the Socialist-Revolutionary-Menshevik leaders, officers, deputies, etc., etc.

Last, but not least, the most outstanding fact in the present situation is *the revolt of the peasantry*. Here is an objective passing over of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks, shown not by words but by deeds. For, notwithstanding the lies of the bourgeois press and its miserable henchmen of the "vacillating" *Novaya Zhizn* and Co., and their wails about pogroms and anarchy, the fact is there. The movement of the peasants in Tambov province was an uprising both in the material and political sense, an uprising that has yielded such splendid political results as, in the first place, permission to give the land to the peasants. It is not for nothing that the S.-R.

rabble, including the *Dyelo Naroda*, frightened by the uprising, now *screams* about the necessity of giving over the lands to the peasants. Here is the demonstration of the correctness of Bolshevism and its success, *in deeds*. It has turned out to be impossible to "teach" the Bonapartists and their lackeys in the pre-parliament otherwise than by means of an uprising.

This is a fact. Facts are stubborn things. And such a factual "argument" in *favour* of an uprising is stronger than thousands of "pessimistic" evasions on the part of confused and frightened politicians.

If the peasant uprising were not an event of nation-wide political import, the S.-R. lackeys from the pre-parliament would not be shouting about the necessity of giving over the land to the peasants.

Another splendid political and revolutionary consequence of the peasant uprising, as already noted in the *Rabochy Put*, is the delivery of grain to the railroad stations in the Tambov province. Here is another "argument" for you, confused gentlemen, an argument in favour of the uprising as the only means to save the country from the famine that knocks at our door and from a crisis of unheard-of dimensions. While the S.-R.-Menshevik betrayers of the people are grumbling, threatening, writing resolutions, promising to feed the hungry by convoking the Constituent Assembly, the people are beginning to solve the bread question *Bolshevik-fashion*, by rebelling against the landowners, capitalists, and speculators.

The wonderful results of *such* a solution (the only real solution) of the bread question, even the bourgeois press, even the *Russkaya Volya*, was compelled to admit by way of publishing information to the effect that the railroad stations in Tambov province were swamped with grain . . . *after the peasants had revolted!!*

No, to doubt now that the majority of the people is following and will follow the Bolsheviks means shamefully to vacillate and in practice to throw overboard *all* the principles of proletarian revolutionism, to renounce Bolshevism completely.

We are not strong enough to seize power, and the bourgeoisie is not strong enough to hinder the calling of the Constituent Assembly.

The first part of this argument is a simple paraphrase of the preceding argument. It does not gain in strength and convincing power, when the confusion of its authors and their fear of the bourgeoisie is expressed in terms of pessimism concerning the workers

and optimism concerning the bourgeoisie. If the military cadets and the Cossacks say that they will fight against the Bolsheviks to the last drop of their blood, this deserves full credence; if, however, the workers and soldiers at hundreds of meetings express full confidence in the Bolsheviks and affirm their readiness to stand fast for the passing of power to the Soviets, then it is "timely" to recall that voting is one thing and fighting another!

Of course, with this kind of argument, the uprising is "refuted." But the question is, wherein does this peculiarly conceived and peculiarly orientated "pessimism" differ from a political shift to the side of the bourgeoisie?

Look at the facts. Remember the Bolshevik declarations, repeated thousands of times and now "forgotten" by our pessimists. We have said thousands of times that the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies are the power, that they are the vanguard of the revolution, that they *can* take power. Thousands of times have we upbraided the Mensheviks and S.-R.'s for phrase-mongering concerning the "plenipotentiary organs of democracy" and at the same time for *being afraid* to transfer power to the Soviets.

And what has the Kornilov affair proven? It has proven that the Soviets are a real power.

And, now, after this has been proven by experience, by facts, we shall repudiate Bolshevism, deny ourselves, and say: we are not strong enough (although we have the Soviets of both capitals and a majority of the provincial Soviets on the side of the Bolsheviks)!!! Are these not shameful vacillations? As a matter of fact, our "pessimists" throw overboard the slogan of "All power to the Soviets," though they are afraid to admit it.

How can it be proven that the bourgeoisie is not sufficiently strong to hinder the calling of the Constituent Assembly?

If the Soviets *have not the power* to overthrow the bourgeoisie, this *means* that the latter is strong enough to hinder the calling of the Constituent Assembly, for there is nobody to prevent it from doing this. To trust the promises of Kerensky and Co., to trust the resolutions of the pre-parliament lackeys—is this worthy of a member of a proletarian party and a revolutionist?

Not only has the bourgeoisie power to hinder the calling of the Constituent Assembly, if the present government is not overthrown, but it can also *indirectly* achieve this result by surrendering Petrograd to the Germans, by laying the front open, by increasing lock-

outs, by sabotaging deliveries of foodstuffs. It has been proven by facts that, to a certain extent, the bourgeoisie has already been doing all this. That means that it is capable of doing all this *to the full extent,* if the workers and soldiers do not overthrow it.

The Soviets must be a revolver pointed at the temple of the government with the demand of convoking the Constituent Assembly and renouncing Kornilovist plots.

This is how far one of the two sad pessimists has gone.

He had to go that far, for to renounce the uprising means to renounce the slogan of "All power to the Soviets."

Of course, a slogan is "not a sanctuary"; we all agree to that. But then why has *no one* raised the question of changing this slogan (in the same way as I raised that question after the July days)? Why be *afraid* to say it openly, in spite of the fact that the question of the uprising, which is now *indispensable* for the realisation of the slogan, "All power to the Soviets," has been discussed in the party since September?

Our sad pessimists will never be able to extricate themselves in this respect. A renunciation of the uprising is a renunciation of the passing of power to the Soviets and a "transfer" of all hopes and expectations to the kind bourgeoisie, which has "promised" to convoke the Constituent Assembly.

Is it so difficult to understand that once *power* is in the hands of the Soviets, the Constituent Assembly and its success are *guaranteed?* The Bolsheviks have said so thousands of times. *No one* has ever attempted to refute this. Everybody has recognised such a "combined type," but to smuggle in a renunciation of giving the power to the Soviets under the guise of the words "combined type," to smuggle it in *secretly* while *fearing* to renounce our slogan openly—what is this? Can one find a parliamentary expression to characterise it?

Some one has very pointedly retorted to our pessimist: "A revolver without bullets?" If so, it means directly going over to the Liberdans, who have declared the Soviets a "revolver" thousands of times and have deceived the people thousands of times. For *while they have been in control* the Soviets have proven to be a nullity.

If, however, it is a revolver "with bullets," then this is a *technical* preparation for an uprising. For the bullet has to be procured, the revolver has to be loaded—and one bullet alone wouldn't be enough.

Either joining the side of the Liberdans and openly renouncing the slogan "All power to the Soviets," or an uprising.

There is no middle course.

> The bourgeoisie cannot surrender Petrograd to the Germans, although Rodzyanko wants to, for the fighting is done not by the bourgeoisie, but by our heroic sailors.

This argument again reduces itself to the same "optimism" *concerning the bourgeoisie* which is fatally manifested at every step by those who are pessimistic regarding the revolutionary forces and capabilities of the proletariat.

The fighting is done by the heroic sailors, *but* this did not prevent *two* admirals from disappearing before the capture of Esel!

This is a fact. Facts are stubborn things. The facts prove that the admirals are capable of treachery no less than Kornilov. That General Headquarters has not been reformed, and that the commanding staff is Kornilovist, are undisputed facts.

If the Kornilovists (with Kerensky at their head, for he is also a Kornilovist) want to surrender Petrograd, they can do it in two or even in three ways.

First, they can, by an act of treachery of the Kornilovist commanding staff, open the northern land front.

Second, they can "agree" concerning freedom of action for the entire German fleet, which is *stronger* than we are; they can agree both with the German and with the English imperialists. Moreover, the admirals who have disappeared may also have delivered the *plans* to the Germans.

Third, they can, by means of lockouts, and by sabotaging the delivery of foodstuffs, bring our troops to *complete* desperation and impotence.

Not a single one of these three ways can be gainsaid. The facts have proven that the bourgeois-Cossack party of Russia has already knocked at all three of these doors, that it has tried to open all of them.

What follows? It follows that we have no right to *wait* until the bourgeoisie strangles the revolution.

That Rodzyanko's wishes are no trifle has been proven by experience. Rodzyanko is a man of affairs. Behind Rodzyanko stands *capital.* This is beyond dispute. Capital is a huge force as long as the proletariat does not have power. Rodzyanko has carried out the policies of capital, faithfully and truly, *for decades.*

What follows? It follows that to vacillate in the question of an uprising as the only means to save the revolution means to sink into that half-Liberdan, S.-R.-Menshevik cowardly confidence towards the bourgeoisie, half "peasant-like" unquestioning confidence, against which the Bolsheviks have been battling most of all.

Either fold your idle arms on your empty chest and wait, while swearing "faith" in the Constituent Assembly, until Rodzyanko and Co. have surrendered Petrograd and strangled the revolution, or an uprising. There is no middle course.

Even the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, taken separately, does not change anything here, for no "constitutioning," no voting of any arch-sovereign assembly will have any effect on the famine, or on Wilhelm. Both the convocation and the *success* of the Constituent Assembly depend upon the passing of power to the Soviets. This old Bolshevik truth is being proved by reality ever more strikingly and ever more *cruelly*.

We are becoming stronger every day. We can enter the Constituent Assembly as a strong opposition; why should we stake everything?

This is the argument of a philistine who has "read" that the Constituent Assembly is being called, and who confidently acquiesces in the most legal, most loyal, most constitutional course.

It is only a pity that by *waiting* for the Constituent Assembly one can solve neither the question of famine nor the question of surrendering Petrograd. This "trifle" is forgotten by the naive or the confused or those who have allowed themselves to be frightened.

The famine will not wait. The peasant uprising did not wait. The war will not wait. The admirals who have disappeared did not wait.

Will the famine agree to wait, because we Bolsheviks *proclaim* faith in the convocation of the Constituent Assembly? Will the admirals who have disappeared agree to wait? Will the Maklakovs and Rodzyankos agree to stop the lockouts and the sabotaging of grain deliveries, to abrogate the secret treaties with the English and the German imperialists?

This is what the arguments of the heroes of "constitutional illusions" and parliamentary cretinism reduce themselves to. The living reality disappears, and what remains is only a *paper* dealing with the convocation of the Constituent Assembly; what remains is only elections.

And blind people are still wondering why hungry people and soldiers betrayed by generals and admirals are indifferent to the elections! Oh, wiseacres!

> If the Kornilovists were to start things, then we would show them! But why should we ourselves risk beginning?

This is unusually convincing and unusually revolutionary. History does not repeat itself, but if we turn our back to it, and, scrutinising the first Kornilov affair, repeat: "If the Kornilovists were to start" —if we do so, what excellent revolutionary strategy! How close it is to "maybe and perhaps"! Maybe the Kornilovists will start again at an inopportune time. Isn't this a "strong" argument? What kind of an earnest foundation for a proletarian policy is this?

And what if the Kornilovists of the second draft will have learned something? What if they *wait* until hunger riots begin, until the front is broken through, until Petrograd is surrendered, *without* beginning action till then? What then?

What is proposed is that the tactics of the proletarian party be built on the possibility of the Kornilovists' repeating one of their old errors!

Let us forget all that was being and has been demonstrated by the Bolsheviks a hundred times, all that the half year's history of our revolution has proven, namely, that there is *no* way out, that there is no objective way out and can be none outside of either a dictatorship of the Kornilovists or a dictatorship of the proletariat. Let us forget this, let us renounce all this and wait! Wait for what? Wait for a miracle: for the tempestuous and catastrophic course of events from May 3 until September 11 to be succeeded (due to the prolongation of the war and the spread of famine) by a peaceful, quiet, smooth, legal convocation of the Constituent Assembly and by a fulfilment of its most lawful decisions. Here you have the "Marxist" tactics! Wait, ye hungry! Kerensky has promised to convoke the Constituent Assembly.

> There is really nothing in the international situation that would oblige us to act immediately; rather would we damage the cause of a Socialist revolution in the West, if we were to allow ourselves to be shot.

This argument is truly magnificent: Scheidemann "himself," Renaudel "himself" would not be able to "manipulate" more cleverly the sympathies of the workers for the international Socialist revolution!

Just think of it: under devilishly difficult conditions, having but

one Liebknecht (and at hard labour at that), without newspapers, without freedom of assembly, without Soviets, with *all* classes of the population, including every well-to-do peasant, incredibly hostile to the idea of internationalism, with the imperialist big, middle, and petty bourgeoisie splendidly organised—the Germans, *i.e.*, the German revolutionary internationalists, the German workers dressed in sailors' jackets, started a mutiny in the navy with one chance of winning out of a hundred.

But we, with dozens of papers at our disposal, freedom of assembly, a majority in the Soviets, we proletarian internationalists, situated best in the whole world, should refuse to support the German revolutionists by our uprising. We should reason like the Scheidemanns and Renaudels, that it is most prudent not to revolt, for if we are shot, then the world will lose such excellent, reasonable, ideal internationalists!

Let us prove how reasonable we are. Let us pass a resolution of sympathy with the *German insurrectionists,* and let us renounce the insurrection in Russia. This would be genuine, reasonable internationalism. And how fast world internationalism would blossom forth, if the same wise policy were to triumph *everywhere!* . . .

The war has tired out, has mangled the workers of all countries to the utmost. Outbursts in Italy, in Germany, and in Austria, are becoming frequent. We *alone* have Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Let us then *keep on waiting*. Let us betray the German internationalists as we are betraying the Russian peasants, who, not by words but by deeds, by their uprising against the landowners, appeal to us to rise against Kerensky's government. . . .

Let the clouds of the imperialist conspiracy of the capitalists of all countries who are ready to strangle the Russian Revolution darken—we shall wait patiently until we are strangled *by the ruble!* Instead of attacking the conspirators and breaking their ranks by a victory of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, let us wait for the Constituent Assembly, where all international plots will be vanquished by *voting,* provided that Kerensky and Rodzyanko conscientiously convoke the Constituent Assembly. Have we any right to doubt the honesty of Kerensky and Rodzyanko?

But "every one" is against us! We are isolated; the Central Executive Committee, the Menshevik-internationalists, the *Novaya Zhizn* people, and the Left S.-R.'s have been issuing and will issue appeals against us!

A crushing argument. Up to now we have been mercilessly castigating the vacillators for their vacillations. *By so doing*, we have won the sympathies of the people. *By so doing*, we have conquered the Soviets, without which the uprising could not be safe, quick, sure. Now let us use the Soviets which we won over in order *to pass, ourselves, into the camp of the vacillators.* What a splendid career for Bolshevism!

The whole essence of the policy of the Liberdans and Chernovs, and also of the "Left" among the S.-R.'s and Mensheviks, consists in *vacillations.* As an *indication* of the fact that the *masses are moving to the Left,* note that the Left S.-R.'s and Menshevik-internationalists have *tremendous* political importance. Two such facts as the passing of some 40 per cent of both Mensheviks and S.-R.'s into the camp of the Left, on the one hand, and the peasant uprising, on the other, are clearly and obviously connected with each other.

But it is the very character of this connection that reveals the abysmal spinelessness of those who have now undertaken to whimper over the fact that the Central Executive Committee, which has rotted away, or the vacillating Left S.-R.'s and Co., have come out against us. For these vacillations of the petty-bourgeois leaders—the Martovs, Kamkovs, Sukhanovs, and Co.—have to be juxtaposed to the *uprising* of the peasants. Here is a *realistic* political juxtaposition. With whom shall we go? With the vacillating handfuls of Petrograd leaders, who have *indirectly* expressed the radicalisation of the masses, and who, at *every* political turn, have shamefully whimpered, vacillated, run to ask forgiveness of the Liberdans, Avksentyevs and Co., *or with those masses that have moved to the Left?*

Thus, and only thus, can the question be stated.

Because the peasant uprising has been betrayed by the Martovs, Kamkovs, and Sukhanovs, we, the workers' party of revolutionary internationalists, are asked also to betray it. This is what the policy of "nodding" to the Left S.-R.'s and Menshevik-internationalists reduces itself to.

But we have said: to help the vacillating, we must stop vacillating ourselves. Those "lovely" Left petty-bourgeois democrats in their vacillations have even sympathised with a coalition! In the long run we succeeded in making them follow us because we ourselves did not vacillate. Life has vindicated us.

These gentlemen by their vacillations have always been ruining the revolution. We alone have saved it. Shall we now shrink

back, when the famine is knocking at the gates of Petrograd and Rodzyanko and Co. are preparing to surrender it?

> But we have not even firm connections with the railwaymen and the postal employees. Their official representatives are the Plansons. And can we win without the post office and without railroads?

Yes, yes, Plansons here, Liberdans there. What confidence have the *masses* shown them? Is it not we who have kept on proving that those leaders betrayed the *masses?* Was it not from those leaders that the masses turned *towards us,* both at the elections in Moscow and at the elections to the Soviets? Or doesn't the mass of railroad and postal employees starve? Nor strike against Kerensky and Co.?

"Did we have connections with these unions before March 12?" one comrade asked a pessimist. The latter replied by pointing out that the two revolutions were not comparable. But this reply only *strengthens* the position of the one who asked the question. For it is the Bolsheviks who have spoken thousands of times about a prolonged preparation of the *proletarian* revolution *against* the *bourgeoisie* (and they have not spoken about it, in order to forget it on the eve of the decisive moment). It is the very *separation* of the proletarian elements of the masses from the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois upper layer that characterises the political and economic life of the unions of postal employees and railwaymen. What matters is not necessarily to secure beforehand "connections" with one or the other union; what matters is that only a victory of a proletarian and peasant uprising *can* satisfy the *masses* both of the army of railwaymen and of postal and telegraph employees.

> There is enough bread in Petrograd for two or three days. Can we give bread to the insurrectionists?

One of a thousand skeptical remarks (the skeptics can *always* "doubt," and cannot be refuted by anything but experience), one of those remarks that put the burden where it does not belong.

It is Rodzyanko and Co., it is precisely the bourgeoisie that is preparing the famine and speculating on strangling the revolution by famine. There is no escaping the famine and *there can be none* outside of an uprising of the peasants against the landowners in the village and a victory of the workers over the capitalists in the cities and in the centre. Outside of this it is *impossible* either to get grain from the rich, or to transport it despite their sabotage, or to break the resistance of the corrupt employees and the capitalist profiteers, or to establish strict accounting. This has been proven by the his-

tory of the supply organisations, of the efforts of the "democracy" that has *complained* millions of times against the sabotage of the capitalists, that has *whimpered* and *supplicated.*

There is no power on earth outside the power of a victorious proletarian revolution that would pass from complaints and begging and tears, to *revolutionary action.* And the longer the proletarian revolution is delayed, the longer it is protracted by events or by the vacillations of the wavering and confused, the more victims it will cost and the more difficult it will be to *organise* the transportation and distribution of foodstuffs.

"Delaying the uprising means death"—this is what we have to answer to those having the sad "courage" to look at the growing economic ruin, at the approaching famine, and still *dissuade* the workers from the uprising (*that is, persuade them to wait, and still place confidence in the bourgeoisie*).

There is no danger in the situation at the front either. Even if the soldiers conclude a truce by themselves, there is still no calamity in that.

But the soldiers will not conclude a truce. This requires state power, which cannot be obtained without an uprising. The soldiers will simply *run away.* Reports from the front tell that. It is impossible to wait without the risk of aiding a collusion between Rodzyanko and Wilhelm and without the risk of *complete* economic ruin, with the soldiers running away in masses, once they (*being already close to desperation*) sink into absolute despair and leave everything to the mercy of fate.

But if we take power, and obtain neither a truce nor a democratic peace, then the soldiers may not wish to fight a revolutionary war. What then?

An argument which brings to mind the saying: one fool can ask ten times more questions than ten wise men are capable of answering.

We have never denied the difficulties of *power* during an imperialist war. Nevertheless, we have always *preached* the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry. Shall we renounce this, when the moment has actually arrived?

We have always said that the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country creates gigantic changes in the international situation, in the economic life of the country, in the condition of the army, in its mood—shall we now "forget" all this, and allow ourselves to be frightened by the "difficulties" of the revolution?

> As everybody reports, the masses are not in a mood that would drive them into the streets. Among the signs justifying pessimism may be mentioned the unusual spread of the pogromist and Black Hundred press.

When people allow themselves to be frightened by the bourgeoisie, then all objects and phenomena naturally appear yellow to them. First, they substitute an impressionist, intellectual criterion of the movement for the Marxist one; for a political analysis of the development of the class struggle and of the course of events throughout the country as a whole against the international background as a whole, they substitute subjective impressions of moods. That a firm party line, its unyielding resolve, is *also* a mood-creating *factor*, particularly in the sharpest revolutionary moments, they "conveniently" forget, of course. It is sometimes very "convenient" for people to forget that the responsible leaders, by their vacillations and by their readiness to burn their idols of yesterday cause the most unbecoming vacillations in the mood of certain strata of the masses.

Secondly—and this is at present the main thing—in speaking about the mood of the masses, the spineless people forget to add:

that "everybody" reports it as a tense and expectant mood;

that "everybody" agrees that, called upon by the Soviets for the defence of the Soviets, the workers will step forward as one man;

that "everybody" agrees that the workers are greatly dissatisfied with the indecision of the centre concerning the "final decisive struggle," whose inevitability is clearly recognised;

that "everybody" unanimously characterises the mood of the broadest masses as close to despair and points at the anarchy developing on this very basis; and

that "everybody" also recognises that there is among the class-conscious workers a definite unwillingness to go out into the streets *only* for demonstrations, *only* for partial struggles, since the approach of not a partial but a general struggle is in the air, while the hopelessness of individual strike demonstrations and acts of pressure has been tested and fully understood.

And so forth.

If we approach this characterisation of the mass mood from the point of view of the entire development of the class and political struggle and of the entire course of events during the half year of

our revolution, it will become clear to us how those people frightened by the bourgeoisie are distorting the question. The question is not the same as it was before May 3-4, June 22, July 16, for then there was a *spontaneous excitement* which we, as a party, either failed to comprehend (May 3) or held back and shaped into a peaceful demonstration (June 22 and July 16), for we knew very well at that time that the Soviets were *not yet* ours, that the peasants *still* trusted the Liberdan-Chernov and not the Bolshevik course (uprising), that consequently we could not have back of us the majority of the people, and that consequently the uprising was premature.

At that time the question of the last decisive struggle did *not* arise at all among the majority of the class-conscious workers; not one out of all the party units would have raised that question at that time. As to the unenlightened and very broad masses, there was neither a concentrated mood nor the resolve born out of despair among them; there was only a spontaneous *excitement* with the naive hope of "influencing" Kerensky and the bourgeoisie by "action," by a demonstration pure and simple.

What is needed for an uprising is not this, but a conscious, firm, and unswerving resolve on the part of the class-conscious elements to fight to the end; this on the one hand. On the other, a concentrated mood of despair among the broad masses who *feel* that nothing can be saved now by half-measures; that you cannot "influence" anybody by merely influencing him; that the hungry will "smash everything, destroy everything, even in an anarchist way," *if* the Bolsheviks are not able to lead them in a decisive battle.

It is precisely to this combination of a tense mood as a result of the lessons of experience among the class-conscious elements and a mood of hatred towards the lockout employers and capitalists, a mood close to despair among the broadest masses, that the development of the revolution has in practice brought both the workers *and* the peasantry.

It is precisely on this basis that we can also understand the "success" of the scoundrels of the Black Hundred press who imitate Bolshevism. That the Black Hundreds are full of malicious glee at the approach of a decisive battle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, has been observed in all revolutions without exception; this has always been so, and it is absolutely unavoidable. And if you allow yourselves to be frightened by *this* circumstance, then you have to renounce not only the uprising but the proletarian revo-

lution in general. For this revolution in a capitalist society *cannot* mature without being accompanied by malicous glee on the part of the Black Hundreds and by hopes that they would be able to feather their nest in this way.

The class-conscious workers know perfectly well that the Black Hundreds work hand in hand with the bourgeoisie, and that a decisive victory of the workers (in which the petty bourgeoisie does not believe, which the capitalists are afraid of, which the Black Hundreds wish out of sheer malice, convinced as they are that the Bolsheviks cannot retain power)—that this victory will utterly *crush* the Black Hundreds, that the Bolsheviks *will* be able to retain power, firmly and to the greatest advantage of all humanity, tired out and made wretched by the war.

Indeed, is there anybody in his senses who can doubt that the Rodzyankos and Suvorins are acting in accord, that the roles are distributed among them?

Has it not been proven by facts that Kerensky acts on Rodzyanko's order, while the "State Printing Press of the Russian Republic" (don't laugh!) prints at the expense of the state the Black Hundred speeches of the Black Hundred "State Duma"? Has not this fact been exposed even by the lackeys from the *Dyelo Naroda,* who do lackey service to "one of their little ilk"? Has not the experience of all elections proven that the Cadet nominations were fully supported by the *Novoye Vremya,* which is a venal paper controlled by the "interests" of the tsarist landowners?

Did we not read yesterday that commercial and industrial capital (non-partisan capital, of course; oh, non-partisan capital, to be sure, for the Vikhlyayevs and Rakitnikovs, the Gvozdevs and Nikitins are in coalition not with the Cadets—God forbid—but with the *non-partisan* commercial and industrial circles!) has donated the goodly sum of 300,000 rubles to the Cadets?

The whole Black Hundred press, as we look at things from a class, not from a sentimental point of view, is a branch of the firm "Ryabushinsky, Milyukov, and Co." Capital buys, on the one hand, the Milyukovs, Zaslavskys, Potresovs, and so on; on the other, the Black Hundreds.

There is no other means of putting an end to this most hideous poisoning of the people by the Black Hundred plague than the *victory of the proletariat.*

Is it any wonder that the crowd, tired out and made wretched by

hunger and the prolongation of the war, eagerly reaches out for the Black Hundred poison? Can one imagine a capitalist society on the eve of a collapse without despair among the oppressed masses? And can the despair of the masses, a large part of whom are still in darkness, not express itself in increased consumption of all sorts of poison?

No; the position of those who, in arguing about the mood of the masses, place at the door of the masses their own personal spinelessness, is hopeless. The masses are divided into those who consciously wait and those who unconsciously are ready to sink into despair; but the masses of the oppressed and the hungry are *not* spineless.

On the other hand, the Marxist party cannot reduce the question of an uprising to the question of a military conspiracy.

Marxism is an unusually profound and many-sided doctrine. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that *scraps* of quotations from Marx—especially when the quotations are made inappropriately—can always be found among the "arguments" of those who break with Marxism. A military conspiracy is Blanquism, *if* it is organised not by a party of a definite class, *if* its organisers have not analysed the political moment in general and the international situation in particular, *if* the party has not on its side the sympathy of the majority of the people, as proven by objective facts, *if* the development of events in the revolution has not brought about a practical refutation of the conciliatory illusions of the petty bourgeoisie, *if* the majority of the recognised "plenipotentiary" or otherwise expressed organs of revolutionary struggle like the Soviets have not been conquered, *if* there has not ripened a sentiment in the army (if this is going on during a war) against the government that protracts the unjust war against the whole of the people, *if* the slogans of the uprising (like "All power to the Soviets," "Land to the peasants," or "Immediate offer of a democratic peace to all the belligerent peoples, coupled with an immediate abrogation of all secret treaties and secret diplomacy," etc.) have not become widely known and popular, *if* the advanced workers are not convinced of the desperate situation of the masses and of the support of the village, a support proven by a serious peasant uprising or by an uprising against the landowners and the government that defends the landowners, *if* the economic situation of the country inspires one with earnest hopes for a favourable solution of the crisis by peaceable and parliamentary means.

Is this sufficient?

In my pamphlet entitled: *Will the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?"* * (I hope it will appear one of these days), I have referred to a quotation from Marx which really bears upon the question of an uprising and which enumerates the features of an uprising as an "art."

I am ready to wager that if we were to propose to all those chatterers, who now shout in Russia against a military conspiracy, to open their mouths, if we were to appeal to them to explain the difference between the "art" of an armed uprising and a military conspiracy that deserves condemnation, they could either repeat what was quoted above or they would cover themselves with shame and would call forth the general ridicule of the workers. Why not try, my dear also-Marxists! Sing us a song *against* "military conspiracy"!

Postscript

The above lines had been written when I received at eight o'clock Tuesday evening the morning Petrograd papers, with an article of Mr. V. Bazarov in the *Novaya Zhizn.* Mr. V. Bazarov asserts that "a hand-written bulletin was distributed in the city, in which arguments were presented in the name of two eminent Bolsheviks, against immediate action."

If this is true, I beg the comrades whom this letter cannot reach earlier than Wednesday noon, to *publish it* as quickly as possible.

I did not write it for the press; I wanted to converse with the members of our party by way of correspondence. But if the heroes of the *Novaya Zhizn,* who do not belong to the party and who have been ridiculed by it a hundred times for their contemptible spinelessness (those are the elements who voted for the Bolsheviks the day before yesterday, for the Mensheviks yesterday, and who *almost* united them at the world-famous unity congress), if such individuals receive a *bulletin* from members of our party, in which they make propaganda against an uprising, then we cannot keep silent. We must agitate also *in favour of* an uprising. Let the anonymous individuals finally appear in the light of day, and let them bear the punishment they deserve for their shameful vacillations—even if it be only the ridicule of all class-conscious workers. I have at my disposal only one hour before I send the present letter to Petro-

* Little Lenin Library, Vol. 12.—*Ed.*

grad, and I, therefore, wish to point out only by a word or two a "method" of the sad heroes of the brainless *Novaya Zhizn* tendency. Mr. V. Bazarov attempts to polemise against Comrade Ryazanov, who has said, and who is a thousand times correct in saying, that "an uprising is being prepared by all those who create in the masses a mood of despair and indifference."

The sad hero of a sad cause "rejoins" as follows:

"Have despair and indifference ever conquered?"

Oh, contemptible little fools from the *Novaya Zhizn!* Do they know *such* examples of uprising in history as this, when the masses of the oppressed classes were victorious in a desperate battle *without* having been brought to despair by long sufferings and by an extreme sharpening of all sorts of crises, when those masses had not been seized by indifference towards various lackey-like pre-parliaments, towards the idle playing with revolution, towards the reduction of the Soviets by the Liberdans from organs of power and uprising to the role of empty talking-shops?

Or have the contemptible little fools from the *Novaya Zhizn* perhaps discovered among the masses an *indifference* to the question of bread, to the prolongation of the war, to land for the peasants?

N. Lenin.

Written October 29-30, 1917.
Published in *Rabochy Put,* Nos. 40-41-42, November 1, 2, 3, 1917.

LETTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOLSHEVIK PARTY

COMRADES!

I have not had a chance yet to receive the Petrograd papers for Wednesday, October 31. When the full text of Kamenev's and Zinoviev's declaration, published in the non-party paper, the *Novaya Zhizn*, was transmitted to me by telephone, I refused to believe it; but it is impossible to doubt, and I am compelled to take the opportunity to transmit this letter to the members of the party by Thursday evening or Friday morning, for it would be a crime to keep quiet in the face of such unheard-of *strike-breaking*.

The more serious the practical problem, and the more responsible and "outstanding" the persons committing the strike-breaking, the more dangerous it is, the more decisively must the strike-breakers be thrown out, the more unforgivable it would be to hesitate even in view of past "services" of the strike-breakers.

Just think of it! It is known in party circles that the party has been discussing the question of the uprising since September. Nobody has ever heard of a single letter or leaflet by either of these persons! Now, on the eve, we may say, of the Congress of Soviets, two outstanding Bolsheviks take a stand *against* the majority, and, obviously, *against* the Central Committee. They do not say this directly; and therefore the damage to the cause is still greater, for it is more dangerous to speak by hinting.

From the text of Kamenev's and Zinoviev's declaration it is perfectly clear that they have taken a stand against the Central Committee, for otherwise their declaration would be absurd, however, they did not say *which* decision of the Central Committee they disputed.

Why?

Quite obviously: because it has not been published by the Central Committee.

What is it, then, that we have here?

Dealing with a burning problem of the highest importance, on

the eve of the critical day of November 2, two "outstanding Bolsheviks" attack an *un*published decision of the party centre in the *non*-party press, in a paper which as far as this given problem is concerned, goes *hand in hand with the bourgeoisie against the workers' party!*

Obviously, this is a thousand times meaner and *a million times more harmful* than were all the writings of Plekhanov in the non-party press in 1906-1907, which were so sharply condemned by the party! But at that time it was a question only of elections, while now it is a question of an uprising for the purpose of conquering power!

And with such a question before us, *after* the centre has made a decision, to dispute this *unpublished* decision before the Rodzyankos and Kerenskys in a non-party paper—can one imagine an action more treacherous, more strike-breaking?

I would consider it a shame if, in consequence of my former closeness to those former comrades, I were to hesitate to condemn them. I say outright that I do not consider them comrades any longer, and that I will fight with all my powers both in the Central Committee and at the congress to expel them both from the party.

For a workers' party, which life confronts ever more often with an uprising, cannot solve this difficult problem if unpublished decisions of the centre, after they have been accepted, are disputed in the non-party press, and vacillations and confusion are brought into the ranks of the fighters.

Let the gentlemen, Zinoviev and Kamenev, found their own party out of dozens of people who have grown confused, or out of candidates for the Constituent Assembly. The workers will not join such a party, for its first slogan will be:

"Members of the Central Committee, defeated at the meeting of the Central Committee on the question of decisive conflict, may go to the non-party press to make attacks there on the unpublished decisions of the party."

Let them build such a party for themselves; our party of Bolsheviks will only gain from it.

When all the documents are published, the strike-breaking activities of Zinoviev and Kamenev will stand out still more clearly. In the meantime let the following question engage the attention of the workers:

"Let us assume that the administration of an all-Russian trade

union has decided, after a month's deliberation and with a majority of over eighty per cent, that it is necessary to prepare for a strike, without, however, publishing in the meantime the date or anything else. Let us, further, assume that, *after* the decision, two members under the fraudulent pretext of a 'dissenting opinion,' have not only begun to write to the local groups urging a reconsideration of the decision, but that they have also allowed their letters to be communicated to the *non*-party papers. Let us, finally, assume that they themselves have in the non-party papers attacked this decision, although it has not been published as yet, and that they have begun to denounce the strike before the eyes of the capitalists. Would the workers hesitate in expelling from their midst such strike-breakers?"

As to how the uprising question stands now, so near to November 2, I cannot judge from afar how much damage was done to the cause by the strike-breaking action in the non-party press. Very great *practical* damage has undoubtedly been caused. To remedy the situation, it is first of all necessary to re-establish the unity of the Bolshevik front by excluding the strike-breakers.

The weakness of the ideological arguments against the uprising will be the clearer, the more we drag them out into the open. I have recently written an article about this in the *Rabochy Put*, and if the editors do not find it possible to put it in the paper, the members of the party will probably get acquainted with it from the manuscript.

These so-called "ideological" arguments reduce themselves to the following two. First, they say, it is necessary to "wait" for the Constituent Assembly. Let us wait, they say, maybe we will hold out—this is the whole argument. Maybe, despite famine, despite economic ruin, despite the fact that the soldiers' patience is exhausted, despite Rodzyanko's step towards surrendering Petrograd to the Germans (even despite lock-outs), we will hold out.

Perhaps and maybe—this is all the force of this argument.

The second is noisy pessimism. Under the bourgeoisie and Kerensky, they say, everything was going on well; with us, everything will be bad. The capitalists have everything prepared wonderfully; the workers have everything in bad shape. The "pessimists" shout all they can about the military side of the matter, while the "opti-

mists" keep silent, for it is hardly pleasant to anybody outside of the strike-breakers to reveal anything to Rodzyanko and Kerensky.

Hard times. A grave problem. A grave betrayal.

And still, the problem will be solved, the workers will become consolidated, the peasant uprising and the extreme impatience of the soldiers at the front will do their work! Let us close our ranks more firmly—the proletariat must win!

N. LENIN.

Written October 31, 1917.
First published in *Pravda*, No. 180, November 4, 1927.

LETTER TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

COMRADES!

I am writing these lines on the evening of the 6th. The situation is extremely critical. It is as clear as can be that delaying the uprising now really means death.

With all my power I wish to persuade the comrades that now everything hangs on a hair, that on the order of the day are questions that are not solved by conferences, by congresses (even by Congresses of Soviets), but only by the people, by the masses, by the struggle of armed masses.

The bourgeois onslaught of the Kornilovists, the removal of Verkhovsky show that we must not wait. We must at any price, this evening, tonight, arrest the Ministers, having disarmed (defeated if they offer resistance) the military cadets, etc.

We must not wait! We may lose everything!

The immediate gain from the seizure of power at present is: defence of *the people* (not the congress, but the people, in the first place, the army and the peasants) against the Kornilovist government which has driven out Verkhovsky and has hatched a second Kornilov plot.

Who should seize power?

At present this is not important. Let the Military Revolutionary Committee seize it, or "some other institution" which declares that it will relinquish the power only to the real representatives of the interests of the people, the interests of the Army (immediate offer

of peace), the interests of the peasants (take the land immediately, abolish private property), the interests of the hungry.

It is necessary that all the boroughs, all regiments, all forces should be mobilised and should immediately send delegations to the Military Revolutionary Committee, to the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks, insistently demanding that under no circumstances is power to be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co. until the 7th, by no means!—but that the matter must absolutely be decided this evening or tonight.

History will not forgive delay by revolutionists who could be victorious today (and will surely be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, they risk losing all.

If we seize power today, we seize it not against the Soviets but for them.

Seizure of power is the point of the uprising; its political task will be clarified after the seizure.

It would be a disaster or formalism to wait for the uncertain voting of November 7. The people have a right and a duty to decide such questions not by voting but by force; the people have a right and duty in critical moments of a revolution to give directions to their representatives, even their best representatives, and not to wait for them.

This has been proven by the history of all revolutions, and the crime of revolutionists would be limitless if they let go the proper moment, knowing that upon them depends the *saving of the revolution,* the offer of peace, the saving of Petrograd, the saving from starvation, the transfer of the land to the peasants.

The government is tottering. We must *deal it the death blow* at any cost.

To delay action is the same as death.

Written November 6, 1917.
First published in 1925.